



# NATIONAL

Qasr Amra

## Ancient inspiration comes to light in the desert

By Dina Matar  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Spanish Archaeological Mission in Jordan has just completed another round of its long-term campaign to restore Qasr Amra, one of the best-known and best-preserved Umayyad "desert castles" in the Azraq area. The mission left Jordan late last month with an unwavering determination to return next summer.

Qasr Amra, thought to have been used as a desert retreat and hunting lodge, has long been considered a key monument for the understanding of early Islamic art. The building's location — purposely situated beyond the edge of cultivable land on the Jordanian plateau — makes it a unique place. But what is really special about Qasr Amra is its position in art history: marking the transition

between the personality of the Byzantine culture and the Arabic inspiration.

Amra's greatest, and best known, asset is its wall frescoes and other decorations. These representations, which have survived, amazingly, for centuries, are animated and lively images that convey a lot about the building, its use and purpose.

The Spanish mission has mounted a series of campaigns, in which a group of expert Spanish restorers cleaned and consolidated the building and its paintings. The mission also carried out some excavations, and published detailed documentation offering an insight into the importance of the building, both as a historical monument and as a work of art.

Before beginning its restoration work, the mission subjected the colours and the surface of the walls to a detailed chemical analy-

sis. The Spanish experts were able, on the basis of this analysis, to come up with the best procedure for cleaning and consolidating the paintings, of which some 75 per cent were partially hidden and in poor condition.

"The paintings were hideously covered with smoke," explained restorer Antonio Sanchez, one of the six members of the Qasr Amra team.

"After years of use, the smoke from fires built inside the monument had covered the surfaces of the walls and paintings in black," Mr. Sanchez told the Jordan Times. "Cleaning them required delicate and loving work, and that took so much time."

Mr. Sanchez recalled that some parts of the building had been threatened with collapse, and needed strengthening. Reinforcing these walls also took a long time, and a great deal of delicate handling.

"We introduced a hidden 'loop'

of reinforced concrete into the thickness of the wall to prevent it from falling down," Mr. Sanchez said.

Not only were the walls threatening to collapse, but the condition of the various lively, coloured frescoes had also deteriorated. "Some had big holes in them which we had to fill in using a specially-prepared paste, which later would be topped with the same type of paint used in antiquity," Mr. Sanchez said.

Mr. Sanchez, who returned this autumn to continue the restoration and consolidation of the monument, feels that Qasr Amra should not be left in its present state. "It is such a unique work of art, that it's a pity to have neglected it for so long," he said.

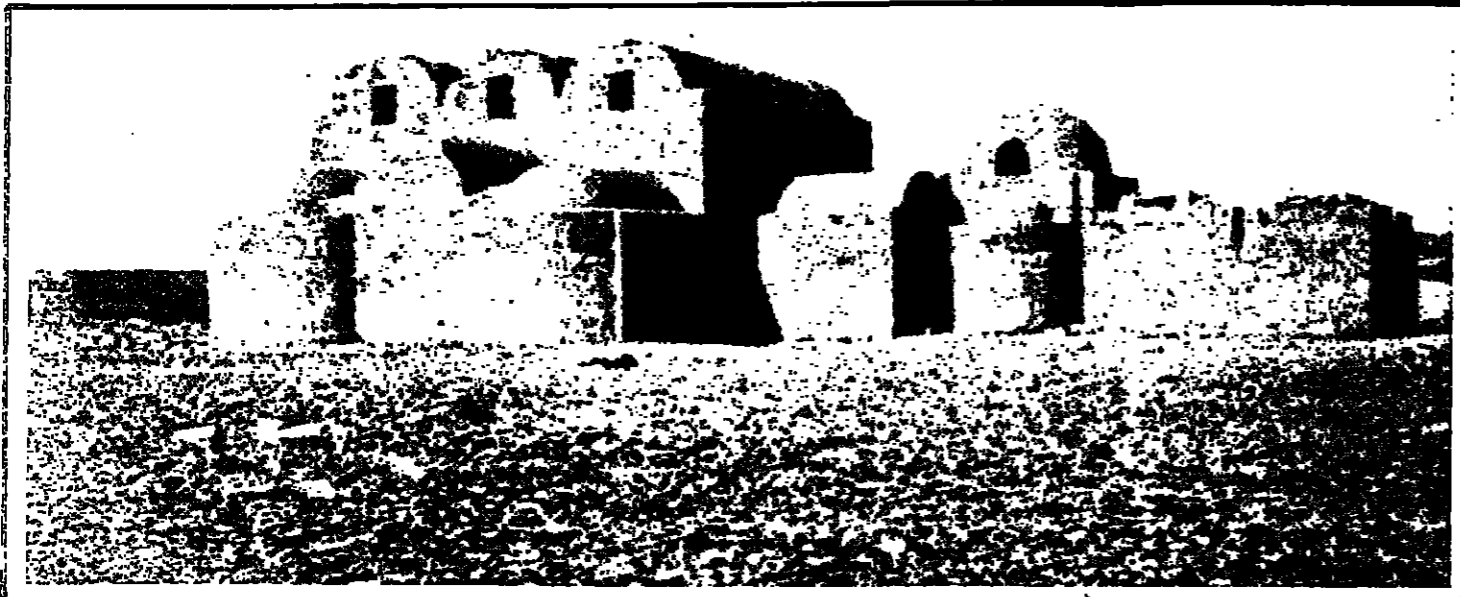
While working on the restoration of the qasr, Mr. Sanchez spent his time living with some bedouins in the area, where he got accustomed to some of the tribal

traditions in the Jordanian desert. "It reminded me so much of Spain that only on very rare occasions did I feel homesick," he said. He laughingly explained how he had abided by some of the customs, such as drinking coffee on each and every occasion, and sitting around with the heads of the tribe chatting about life.

"The funny thing is that I do not know the language, and we had to communicate by signalling all the time," he said.

Mr. Sanchez has a long career behind him of restoration and consolidation in other parts of the world, for example Mexico. The 34-year-old technician is married and has a son called Jaime. "My son's name was very convenient, because it sounds like the word for tent in Arabic. The hospitable bedouins were delighted, and went around calling me Abu Khaime," he said with a glint in his eye.

Qasr Amra (below) is the best preserved of all the desert castles. Its beautiful frescoes (right) still show the artistry of their contemporary life.



# JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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# NATIONAL

## Al al-Bayt Foundation premises open with show of Koranic calligraphy

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein opened this afternoon the temporary premises of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research (Al al-Bayt Foundation), and an exhibition of the development of Koranic calligraphy at the academy's premises.

King Hussein heard a briefing from the academy's president, Dr. Nasreddin Al Assad, who explained that the academy had begun implementation of two long-term important projects. The first is related to the publication of an Islamic civilisation encyclopaedia, and the second to the comprehensive indexing of the Arab and Islamic heritage throughout the world.

Dr. Assad said the academy will submit the results of its research, and plans for future projects, to its annual conference, which will be held in late April 1982. The conference will be held under the patronage of King Hussein.

Thirty-eight exhibits, including 115 reproductions of Koran manuscripts, are on display in the exhibition. They represent the development of Islamic calligraphy, binding and decoration in the various Islamic periods.

Dr. Assad said the week-long exhibition is part of a cooperation agreement between the academy and the trustees of an Islamic festival held in London five years ago, where an exhibition of a full set of original Koran manuscripts was held for the first time in history.

The opening ceremony was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Mudar Badran, Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament Bahjat Al Talhouqi, Chief of the Royal Court Ahmad Al Lawzi, President of the National Consultative Council Ahmad Al Tarawneh, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ibn Zaid, Court Minister 'Amer Khammash, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Sharif Zaid Ibn Shakar, Minister of Culture and Youth Ma' an Abu Nowar, Alia Chairman and President Ali Ghandour and several members of the academy.

## Good time at charity bazaar



Young guests inspect their "Lucky Dip" gains at the Grand Christmas Bazaar held by the British Ladies of Amman on Monday. Hand-made, home-made and home-grown items on sale at the bazaar disappeared fast from the stalls. The proceeds, JD 1,003, will be shared between two charities: the Home of Peace and the Franiscan Sisters. (Photo by Suzanne Zu'mut-Black)

## Alia's still thinking big

By Suzanne Zu'mut-Black  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN, Dec. 15 — Despite worldwide economic gloom Alia, the Royal Jordanian Airline, is looking forward to the coming year with optimism and drive. The present route structure is to be expanded; three more wide-bodied aircraft are to be acquired, and there will be a 20 per cent increase in flying hours.

In a press conference today at the airline's headquarters, Alia Chairman and President Ali Ghandour made these predictions in outlining Alia's policies at the beginning of its 19th year of operations. Starting in January, Alia Boeing 747 jumbo jets will be breaking new ground on the route to Manila via Colombo, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and possibly later extending as far as Seoul.

In May, Alia's new Lockheed TriStars will add a twice-weekly stop at Istanbul en route to London. Frequency of flights closer to home, and particularly to the Gulf area, will also be increased.

1982 will complete the modernisation of Alia's fleet, Mr. Ghandour said. The older Boeing 707 aircraft will either be sold off or used exclusively as cargo carriers. As a consequence of this updating of the fleet, passenger business is expected to rise from a 1981 figure of 1.4 million to 1.75 million in the coming year.

Mr. Ghandour stressed that Alia's working plan during its 19th year is based on Jordan's political and economic needs, and is consistent with His Majesty King Hussein's wish that Alia serve as Jordan's "ambassador at large."

In reply to a question, Mr. Ghandour expanded on recent changes in tourist flow to the West Bank. After going to Jerusalem across the bridge, Alia passengers continue over-land to Cairo and then return to Amman by air to connect with their New York flights.

## Unique skin graft succeeds

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — A team of cosmetic surgeons at the King Hussein Medical Centre has succeeded in an important skin graft operation between the abdomen and the hand, it was announced today.

The team, led by Dr. Ghaith Shubailat, transferred a large area of the skin and the adjoining fat, measuring 21 by 14 centimetres and a two centimetres thick, from the abdomen and the upper thigh of a 12-year-old patient. The skin was transferred onto the left hand in the same operation.

The complicated, operation — the first of its kind in the Arab World — reflects the high medical standards in Jordan, the announcement said. The operating team used microscopic surgery to restore the blood circulation to the skin by connecting numerous minute blood vessels measuring less than one millimetre in diameter.

The operation took 10 hours.

## University of Jordan trustees meet

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — The board of trustees of the University of Jordan held a major session this morning in the presence of all members of the board, including Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ahmad Zaki Yamani and Bahraini Industrial Development Minister Yousef Al Shirawi.

At the beginning of the session, Chief of the Royal Court Ahmad Al Lawzi, who chairs the university's board, welcomed the two honoured guests.

University of Jordan President Abdul Salam Al Majali then submitted the university's annual report, which included a review of the university's achievements since its establishment in 1962, as well as its aspirations in academic, financial, construction and organisational matters. The annual report also covers the achievements of the Jordan University Hospital and its aspirations.

After the board members made their remarks on the report, the board of trustees approved the basic principles of the university's policies, which assert that the educational process should be based on quality, not on quantity.

The board also approved the appointment of a University of Jordan student and a graduate as two members of the board. The board also approved the appointment of Dr. Mohammad Hamdan



Mohammad Idris

## Idris appointed public security director

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — A royal decree has been issued approving the cabinet's decision to appoint Lt. Gen. Mohammad Idris as director of public security, effective today. Lt. Gen. Idris had been serving as military secretary to His Majesty King Hussein.

The cabinet also decided to retire Maj. Gen. Mamoun Khalil from his post as public security director at his own request, as of Dec. 15.

## Team returns from Brussels tourism fair

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — A Jordanian tourism team which ran the Jordanian pavilion at a recent tourist fair in Brussels returned to Amman this evening.

Assistant Director General of Tourism Rafiq Lahham, who headed the delegation, said people working in the representatives of airlines, tour operators, representatives of hotels and tourist offices and those interested in aviation and transport matters participate in the Brussels fair every year.

He said that this year, the Jordanian pavilion was set up in cooperation between Alia, the Royal Jordanian Airline, several tourist organisations and hotels in Jordan. Some 20,000 visitors visited the Jordanian pavilion, he said.

Mr. Lahham said contacts were made with tour operators to attract tourists to visit Jordan. Visits to Jordan resulting from these contacts will start as of next February.

discussions which took place during the session, and the remarks made by the members of the board. The remarks focused on the need to support the university financially, to enable it to achieve its goals.

## Permit requirement lifted for Egyptians in Jordan

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (J.T.) — Egyptian nationals will no longer be required to obtain residence permits to live and work in Jordan, according to a decision by Interior Minister Suleiman Arar.

The decision does not, however, affect the work permit requirements of the Ministry of Labour.

An Interior Ministry official told the Jordan Times that the decision, to take effect immediately, exempts Egyptians from having to obtain residence permits from the residence and foreigners' affairs department of the Public Security Directorate.

Only a visa issued by a Jordanian mission abroad, or at a border point, to indicate legal entry is now required from Egyptian nationals, he said.

Syrian nationals have been exempt from residence permits in Jordan since 1975.

## Indian Muslim delegation leaves

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — Dr. Mohammad Burhaneddin and his delegation representing the Bohra community in India left Amman this evening at the end of a three-day visit to Jordan. They met with His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and officials at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. During its visit to Jordan, the delegation also visited the graves of the Prophet Mohammad's companions.

## Bank employees learn about Jordan's forward market

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (J.T.) — The assistant manager of Citibank in Amman, Mr. Johnny Zeidan, today delivered a lecture on the forward market in currencies and its applications in Jordan, to participants in a training seminar on foreign currency handling organised by the Association of Banks in Jordan.

Mr. Zeidan gave the historical background of the operations of the forward market in Jordan. He also explained the meaning of dealing with the market, its benefits and the significance of the operations of this market.

The lecturer also reviewed the dangers to the agent who deals with this market. Notable among these dangers are currency price fluctuations, he said.

Mr. Zeidan also explained the factors which help fix the prices of forward market contracts, and Central Bank instructions on dealings in the market.

The lecture was one of a series of advanced lectures supervised by the Association of Banks in Jordan with the aim of acquainting the participants and bank employees in Jordan with modern techniques used in dealing with foreign currencies.

Thirty-eight participants, representing banks, companies and financial establishments which are members of the association, are participating in the seminar at the association's premises.

## JD 2.25 m loan to pay for new buses

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (J.T.) — The Public Transport Corporation will receive a syndicated bank loan of JD 2.25 million to purchase 250 new buses, under agreement signed today. The loan is being provided by the Housing Bank, the Arab Bank and the Jordan Securities Corporation.

The Public Transport Corporation is buying 250 buses from the German manufacturer M.A.N. Seventy-five of these buses, which can take 88 passengers each, have already arrived. The rest are expected to be in Jordan by next May, bringing the corporation's fleet to 438 within the Amman area.

Minister of Transport Ali Suheimat signed the agreement for the corporation in his capacity as chairman of its board. Housing Bank General Manager Zuhair Khouri signed for his bank; Arab Bank Assistant General Manager Munzer Fakhour signed for the Arab Bank and Jordan Securities Corporation Manager Sa'id Hamami signed for his company.

## Swedish envoy marks a 'first' in diplomacy

AMMAN, Dec. 15 (J.T.) — The Swedish ambassador to Jordan, Mr. Sten Stromholm, has established a novel precedent in diplomacy by his "bi-residential" status in both Lebanon and Jordan.

Ambassador and Mrs. Stromholm held a reception at their Amman residence Monday night, and the ambassador later pointed out to the Jordan Times that he is maintaining official residences in both Amman and Beirut.

He plans to divide his time equally between both capitals. He is also responsible for covering Syria, though he does not maintain a home there.

The Swedish embassy here also includes the permanently resident charge d'affaires, Mr. Mathias Mossberg.

The Jordan Times had reported incorrectly in yesterday's newspaper that Ambassador Stromholm was resident only in Beirut.

## Today's Weather

It will be increasingly cold and partly cloudy, with scattered showers in the north. Winds will be southwesterly moderate, freshening at times. In Aqaba it will be hazy, with northerly moderate winds and calm seas.

	Overnight low	Daytime high
Amman	6	16
Aqaba	10	23
Deserts	5	19
Jordan Valley	9	22

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 19, Aqaba 25. Humidity readings: Amman 28 per cent. Aqaba 27 per cent.

## NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

- Queen visits charity home**  
AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — Her Majesty Queen Noor visited this afternoon Dar Al Salam (the Home of Peace) home for the disabled and needy, run by the Sisters of Charity. The Queen inspected the home and its utilities, and was briefed on the conditions of the people living in it. She also heard a briefing on the services rendered by the home to 95 residents.
- Alia seeks more flights to London**  
AMMAN, Dec. 15 (J.T.) — Civil Aviation Director General Sharif Ghazi Rakan will leave for London at the end of this week to hold talks with British aviation officials on an increase in the number of flights to London by Alia, the Royal Jordanian Airline, the local press reported today. It said Alia wants to make four flights a week and to amend the memorandum of understanding signed between the Jordanian and British civil aviation authorities in 1979.
- Badran meets 2 visiting aides**  
AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — Prime Minister Mudar Badran received at his office this afternoon Saudi Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Ahmad Zaki Al Yamani and Bahraini Minister of Industrial Development Yousef Al Shirawi. The meeting was attended by University of Jordan President Abdul Salam Al Majali. Both ministers came to Amman to attend the meeting of the University of Jordan's board of trustees, of which they are members.
- NCC panel meets on budget**  
AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — The financial and administrative committee of the National Consultative Council (NCC) met today under its chairman, Dr. Khalil Al Salem, to discuss the draft state budget for 1982. The committee will resume its meetings for this purpose tomorrow morning. The meeting was attended by the finance minister and the director of general budget.
- Princess Wijdan opens exhibition**  
AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — An exhibition of the paintings of Princess Wijdan Ali opened this evening at the Alia Art Gallery. The paintings are inspired by the environment of the Jordanian desert. The opening ceremony of the 12-day exhibition was attended by several officials and art lovers, as well as diplomatic corps members.
- Ministry stocks up on turkey**  
AMMAN, Dec. 15 (Petra) — A spokesman for the Ministry of Supply has said that in view of the increased demand for frozen turkey, particularly with Christmas drawing near, the ministry has imported turkey in large quantities, which it intends to sell at 750 fils a kilogramme wholesale and 850 fils a kilogramme retail. The ministry is prepared to meet the demand for turkey through its centres in Jabal Hussein, Jabal Luweibdeh and its warehouses in Juweideh, and its vehicles will also distribute the meat to shops willing to sell it.

## WHAT'S GOING ON

- Exhibitions**
- An exhibition of "Contemporary Jordanian Painters," at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
  - The paintings of Rizq Abdul Hadi, at the Ministry of Culture and Youth Art Gallery.
  - Paintings by Basem Al Sheikh Jawad, at the Holiday Inn.
  - Paintings, entitled "Desert", by Princess Wijdan Ali at the Alia Art Gallery.
- The British Council**
- Presents an "An Evening with Suhail Bissharat." Suhail Bissharat, director of the Jordan National Gallery, discusses the contemporary art scene in Jordan with his guests Princess Wijdan Ali, artist and president of the Royal Society of Fine Arts; Mohanna Durra, artist and consultant to the minister of culture, and Prof. Malcolm Quantrill, art critic and deputy editor of Art International. Refreshments will be available from 7 p.m.
- Lecture**
- On kidney diseases, by Dr. Tareq Suheimat, head of the kidney department at the King Hussein Medical Centre. At the Professional Associations Complex, at 6 p.m.

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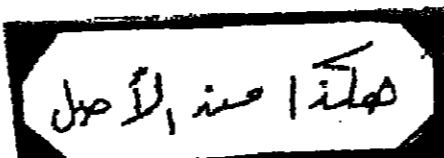
Under the patronage of H.M. King Hussein

The Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation  
Research (Al Al-bait Foundation)  
presents an exhibition of

**KORANIC CALLIGRAPHY AND  
ILLUMINATION**

At the academy's premises, in Umm Uthaina, the corner of  
Abha and Tabouk streets (near the 6th Circle).

The exhibition will be open to the public from 9 a.m. until 3  
p.m., Wednesday 14 Safar 1402  
(Dec. 16) through Tuesday, 25 Safar 1402 (Dec. 22).





ECONOMY

Gold, dollar fall on money markets

LONDON, Dec. 15 (R) — Gold and the dollar eased back on financial markets around the world today...

investors as a safe haven for their money at times of political crisis, fell to \$413.25 an ounce at the morning fix in London and Zurich...

The pound sterling gained from \$1.8670 at yesterday's London close to 1.8817 during trading. Dealers said there was a market feeling that the dollar had been overbought yesterday as investors looked for secure holdings.

Stock markets around the world were mainly quiet with no signs of a repeat of yesterday's fall on Wall Street where the Dow Jones industrial average lost more than 15 points to close at 871.48.

Three oil states offer Libya technical help

ABU DHABI, Dec. 15 (R) — The United Arab Emirates joined Kuwait and Iran today in offering technical help to Libya if its oil output suffered if and when U.S. technicians pulled out of the country.

The United States, accusing Libya of plotting to kill President Reagan, last week urged U.S. nationals to leave Libya and restricted travel there by Americans.

U.K. cuts overseas aid

LONDON, Dec. 15 (R) — Britain's Conservative government, which has already trimmed its foreign aid programme by 15 per cent since 1979, announced a further cut yesterday.

Saudis to feed plants with cheap gas

BAHRAIN, Dec. 15 (R) — New Saudi Arabian oil refineries and chemical plants will have an edge over European rivals because they will be fed with cut-price gas, a senior Saudi official told the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES).

expected to export about 800,000 barrels daily of refined oil products by the second half of the 1980s. This, however, is less than 10 per cent of current Saudi crude oil output.

million barrels daily. They now produce 8.5 million but could go up above 11 million in short bursts, experts believe.

Japanese aides to discuss trade friction

TOKYO, Dec. 15 (R) — A special Japanese cabinet council meets tomorrow to discuss ways of increasing imports and soothing strained trade relations with Western Europe and the United States, government officials said today.

Japan's trade surplus with the U.S. and the European Economic Community (EEC), which is expected to reach more than \$30 billion in the current financial year.

crude oil, would be stockpiled to help redress the trade imbalance.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

Table with columns for currency types (One sterling, One U.S. dollar, One ounce of gold) and their respective rates in U.S. dollars and other currencies.

Germans drive a hard bargain on Soviet gas

The Saudis plan to tap huge volumes of gas to burn as fuel in new refineries and chemical plants, while the gas will also provide the chemical factories with new material.

He also said that by 1987 the Saudis would probably have pushed their maximum sustainable crude output level to 12 million barrels daily.

Oil market analysts say any rise in Saudi capacity to pump oil is good news for the consumer as it strengthens the Saudis' ability to flood the market to enforce their moderate pricing goals on other exporters.

The council failed at an earlier meeting on November 17 to agree on any major steps to reduce higher prices from leading gas producers.

Continental gas buyers were determined to ensure that the gas pipeline to be built from the northerly Norwegian gas fields would come ashore on the continent and not on the coast of the U.K., the competing bidder.

The clause is important to Moscow, which is facing an investment of an estimated \$1.5 billion in the new export pipeline system from western Siberia.

LONDON STOCK MARKET

LONDON, Dec. 15 (R) — Share prices closed slightly easier in very quiet trading, dealers said. At 1500 the F.T. index was down 1.9 at 511.

FRANKFURT: The Soviet Union is being forced to take a dose of its own unpalatable medicine as it draws up the final contracts for its latest controversial natural gas supply deal with Western Europe.

In negotiating with Western plant contractors for pipes and equipment for the 5,500 km gas export pipeline from western Siberia, Moscow beat down prices to minimum levels by carefully shopping around world markets before playing off one equipment supplier against another.

Dr. Klaus Liesen, chief executive of Ruhrgas, made plain at the week-end that the West German gas companies had been successful in holding the line against any demands for "crude oil parity" pricing.

Those supplies — around 2 billion cubic metres a year will come to West Germany — are understood to have been contracted at a price of \$5.50 per million BTU (British Thermal Units), and to have escalated since to around \$5.80 per million BTU.

For the Soviet Union it was vital that agreement be reached with West Germany for the gas export project to succeed at all.

Prices tended to drift on lack of interest with no fresh news to influence trading, dealers added. Falls among leaders were generally limited to penny or two, as in ICI, Guest Keen, Blue Circle, Hawker Siddeley and Beechams.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE

JORDAN TELEVISION schedule table listing channels (CHANNEL 3, CHANNEL 6, RADIO JORDAN) and their respective programs and times.

BBC WORLD SERVICE schedule table listing programs like GMT, News Summary, and various news bulletins.

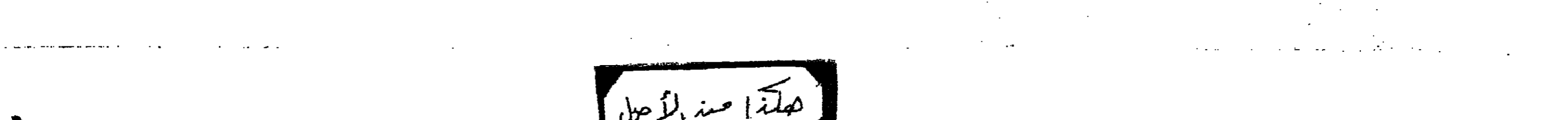
VOICE OF AMERICA schedule table listing programs like GMT, News, and various news bulletins.

AMMAN AIRPORT schedule table listing arrivals and departures for various destinations like Cairo, Beirut, and London.

CULTURAL CENTRES and SERVICE CLUBS table listing various cultural centers and service clubs in Amman.

PRAYER TIMES and CHURCHES table listing prayer times for different mosques and churches in Amman.

LOCAL EXCHANGE RATES and MARKET PRICES table listing exchange rates for various currencies and market prices for different commodities.





Selfies 1/10

MIDDLE EAST

In the wake of a legend

Note: This is the first of a two part series on an article taken from World magazine. The article strives to prove that Sindbad's legendary are based on historical facts.

By John Lawton

Photos by Toregeland and Barbara Wace

On a time there really was a Sindbad the Sailor — according to the crew and the Sohars, a replica of a 25th century Arab dhow that sailed from Oman to China.

...and his crew, of course, have to cope with the able monsters plagued his voyages, but they did not hazard. On several as they were nearly by giant tankers; another sir mainsail spar broke; almost a month they were d with little food and finally, as they raced the as across the South China y faced the threat of

the voyage took just ght months. In addition, Severin spent some ars in research, travel and ion during which he be history of Arab sea-

manship back to Egypt and followed its development in places like Oman, China and India.

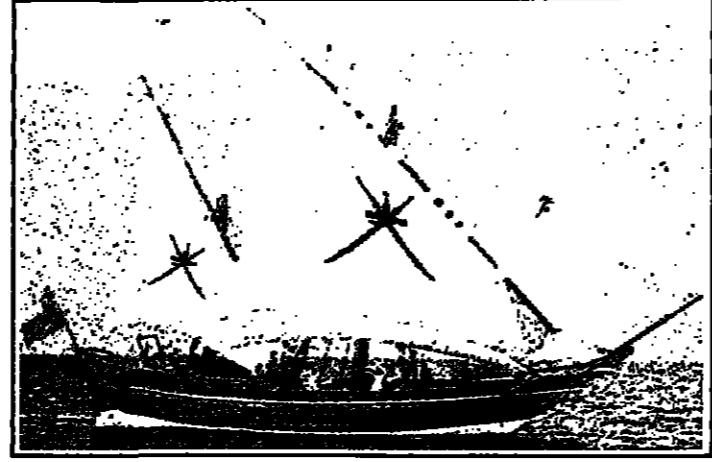
The first people known to have used the sail were the ancient Egyptians; the earliest record of a sailing boat — a drawing of a ship with a mast amidships and a broad square sail hung from it — dates back to about 3900 B.C. It was an Egyptian who provided the first known mariner's tale: an anonymous first-person account of a shipwreck in the Red Sea around 2000 B.C., in which the mythical embellishments of the Sindbad period are instantly obvious.

"I had set out for the mines of the king in a ship 180 feet long and 60 feet wide; we had a crew of 120, the pick of Egypt. A storm broke and we flew before the wind. The ship went down; of all in it only I survived. I was cast upon an island... then I heard the sound of thunder and thought it was a wave; trees broke and the earth quaked. I uncovered my face and found a serpent. It was 45 feet long and its beard was two feet long. Its body was covered with gold and its eyebrows were real lapis lazuli."

The serpent's looks, it turns out, were deceiving; it was a most considerate creature. It took the sailor tenderly up in its mouth, carried him to its lair, listened sympathetically to his story and then comforted him with the news that one of the Pharaoh's ships would soon come along and take him back home. When the rescue ship, as prophesied, did come along, the serpent sent the sailor off with a cargo of incense, and two months

later he was safely home.

Later, and farther east, the people living on the shores of the Arabian Peninsula also learned to sail and in time discovered that they could earn a profit by risking their lives on the sea. Among them were the boat builders and sailors of Makkan (or Magan) — today's Oman — who traded copper and ivory with Mesopotamia. Copper



The Sohars

was mined in Makkan itself, but the ivory could only have come from India or Africa and the implication seems clear: Omani traders, even in 1000 B.C., probably ventured beyond the Arabian Gulf and sailed the open waters of the ocean.

About 500 B.C. these seamen — the early Arabs — also introduced the dhow: a broad-beamed, shallow-draft vessel with lateen-rigged sails, ideally suited for the coastal waters of the Arabian Gulf and the comparatively mild waves of the Indian Ocean. Although relatively flimsy, it was light and manoeuvrable and could speed and quickly out of the path of threatening weather. Its triangular sails, moreover, were designed to catch even the slightest breeze.

The key to their success, however, was the ancient secret of the monsoon winds: the fact that

they could rely on prevailing winds to carry them eastward in winter and westward in summer across the Indian Ocean. They could not explain these "monsoons," but this is not surprising since even today there are mysteries about them.

One theory is that when the summer heat of India causes the air to rise over the subcontinent, winds from the Indian Ocean rush into the vacuum left by the rising air. By the same token, the comparative coolness of Indian winters causes a reverse movement of winds from India to Africa. Whatever the cause, by the first century A.D. the south Arabian mer-

world's ocean sucked the unwary sailor into oblivion.

For those who did succeed, however, profits were high. Because no European power had ever found a sea route to China, the Arabian role as intermediary in East-West trade grew and flourished. By the middle of the eighth century the flow of such precious goods as gold, ivory and gems from India, and silk and fine porcelain from China, had made Baghdad the most important commercial centre in the world, and for the next 500 years Muslim dominance of East-West trade continued.

In the 13th century, however, the Mongols appeared and, conquering China, razed the great port towns. As a consequence, Far East trade waned, and though it continued sporadically for some time, with Arab merchants meeting their Chinese counterparts in Ceylon and Malaya, the heyday of Arab trade with China was over. Partly because of the Mongol destruction, but mostly because, 200 years later, Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer, rounded the Cape of Good Hope and opened a new trade route between Europe and the East.

This voyage, completed in 1448, effectively ended more than 700 years of Arab domination of Eastern trade. Ironically, though, it was an Arab seaman, the great navigator Ahmad Ibn Majid, who guided the Portuguese on the last vital leg of the voyage.

By then, of course, the Arabs had left an indelible mark on Southeast Asia; their dhows had not only carried merchandise, but had also spread Islam and Islamic culture as far as Indonesia and China. By then, too, the intrepid Arab sailors, roaming through 9,600 to 16,000 kilometres of unknown territory, had brought back endless tales of mishaps and adventures — as well as reports of exotic kingdoms bordering the Indian Ocean and China Sea. These stories — repeated, embroidered, expanded and exaggerated — were the basis of the epic of Sindbad the Sailor as immortalised in A Thousand and One Nights.

Until recently, the consensus among scholars was that Sindbad, the world's most famous sailor, never actually existed. The scholar said that the fables spun around him may have been versions of actual exploits and gave examples. One was Sindbad's method of collecting diamonds from a serpent-filled canyon: by dropping chunks of raw meat into

the canyon and retrieving the meat, with gems stuck to them, through the use of large birds. This story, they said, was first told by troops of Alexander the Great returning from India.

Another example was a story of an island that turns out to be a great fish. This tale, as Severin had cause to know, also figures in the life of the Saint Brendan, the medieval navigator-monk; on his voyage to Newfoundland, Saint Brendan and his Irish sailors did exactly what Sindbad did: they aroused the huge creature by lighting fires on its back.

In Oman, however, where the modern Sindbad voyage was launched, some Omanis firmly believe that Sindbad was real. "We believe," said Musalam Ahmad, one of the nine Omanis on Sohars, "that there really was a sailor called 'Sindbad' who had some adventures."

Severin agrees. "The Sindbad chroniclers took one captain and added other adventures to his own," he said, adding that it was this embellishment and expansion of his exploits, that eventually turned Sindbad from a man — "who came from Sohars but operated out of Basra" — into a myth. Severin and the Omanis, in fact, believe this so strongly that they named the dhow that they planned to sail to China Sohars, after the town in Oman where they say Sindbad was born.

In a sense, Severin, a tea planter's son born in India, is the ideal man to explore a world where fact and fantasy mingle. While an undergraduate at Oxford, he rode a motorcycle along Marco Polo's route to China — a trip resulting in his first book Tracking Marco Polo. This was followed by Explorers of the Mississippi — for which he navigated the length of the river by canoe and launch — and four other books on the history of exploration.

Those journeys, however, were just practice for his first major success: sailing an open leather boat across the North Atlantic to show that Irish monks could have been the first Europeans to reach North America, as medieval legends about Ireland's sixth-century Saint Brendan suggested. In a boat of oxhide — a type used by medieval Irish sailors — Severin survived fierce storms off Greenland and a puncturing caused by a small iceberg and then wrote a book about it: The Brendan Voyage which became an international best seller translated into 16 languages.

The Saint Brendan voyage.

Severin says, also led to the Sindbad voyage. "We were sitting off the coast of Newfoundland, when I suddenly realised I had a winner: building and sailing replicas of ancient boats."

But to create public interest, he went on, he also had to have a character like Saint Brendan. "Suddenly," he says, "the figure of Sindbad appeared in my mind." It was natural. The legendary voyages of the world's best known mariner, never seriously studied before, "were ripe for investigation." On publication of The Brendan Voyage, therefore, Severin began to pore over ancient trading documents, maps, shipwrights' plans and museum exhibits. Later, when his research led him to Oman, he also began to walk the coastline — measuring and sketching the rotting ribs — of long-abandoned dhows half buried in the sand.

At first, the Omanis took little notice of the stranger poking around their beaches. "I had written to tell them about my project but apparently they had forgotten," says Severin. But then, on the eve of his departure, he was asked by the ministry of national heritage and culture to give a lecture and showed his audience, which included the minister himself, a film he had made of The Brendan Voyage.

Severin, of course, thought he had finally attracted some attention, but though he was presented with an old Omani sword in appreciation, nothing more was said. Hardly had he returned to his home in County Cork, Ireland, however, when he received a telegram asking him to return immediately to Oman. There, the ministry, with approval of His Majesty Jaboo Bin Said, Sultan of Oman, offered to sponsor Severin's Sindbad project.

"I never actually asked them to sponsor it," says Severin, "they simply decided to do it themselves."

At that point, the research phase ended and the construction phase started. With the help of Omani shipwrights, Severin set about building an authentic replica of the kind of boat Sindbad might have sailed to China over 1,000 years ago. Based on early Arab and Persian sketches and written descriptions of ninth-century, deep-sea trading vessels, he and the shipwrights designed a ship 26 metres long, with a 6.4 metre beam, and two metre draft. It was built of hand-sawn wooden planks sewn together with hand-rolled coconut rope, no nails, and was powered by two triangular

cotton sails, no engine.

They quickly found out, however, that both the materials for such a craft and the craftsmen were scarce. To find both, Severin had to scour the most backward and remote places of the region, where traditional boat-building methods still survive. He found some shipwrights in Oman, for example, but to recruit the rest also had to go to Laccadive Islands, a territory of India off India's western coast. For timber for the hull he had to go to the forests of southern India; there Arab shipwrights of long ago had found and selected their timber and had it hauled out by elephants.

The coconut rope, also from India, was far more difficult to find. As it would be the only thing holding the ship together, it had to be very strong, but most Indian rope makers had long since abandoned the practice of soaking it in seawater — a process once used to give it the strength Severin needed. For weeks, therefore, Severin roamed the west coast of India chewing rope — literally. "People thought I was mad, but it was the only way I could tell it had been soaked in salt water," says Severin.

Finally, from the island of Agatti, came some coconut rope soaked in seawater. But as he was forbidden by government restrictions to go there himself, Severin had to remain on the mainland "tasting" coils of rope sent over by the islanders until he had enough: in all 640 kilometres.

At last, however, Severin was able to assemble his men, his wood and his rope at Sur, on the southeast tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Once one of the busiest boat building and trading towns of the Gulf, Sur, when Severin arrived, was a ghost town in which declining trade with India and East Africa, had forced its traders to sell their boats, and had compelled its famous shipwrights to put away their tools.

The arrival of Tim Severin, his 45-man work force and their tons of materials and supplies soon revived Sur. Spurning modern accommodation, for example, the boat builders chose as their headquarters a 300-year-old, sea front home, empty since the drowning of the owner and his six sons in a sea tragedy 30 years before. Severin and his "green shirts" — so called because of the green smocks his Arab shipwrights wore — gave the rambling, two-storey house a fresh coat of whitewash, moved in and set to work building the Sohars.

Word game section titled 'JUMBLE' with a grid of letters and a cartoon illustration of a burglar.

Cartoon titled 'THE BETTER HALF' by Vinson, showing a man and a woman talking.

Section titled 'YOUR DAILY Horoscope' from the Carroll Righter Institute.

Section titled 'FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, DEC. 16, 1981' with zodiac signs and their corresponding forecasts.

'THE Daily Crossword' by Albert L. Misenko, including a crossword puzzle grid and a list of words.

Comic strip section featuring 'Jeff' and 'Capp' with multiple panels of dialogue.

Comic strip section with multiple panels of dialogue between characters.

A grid for a crossword puzzle with numbers 1 through 63.

